THE FORUM
FLORISSANT VALLEY

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St. Louis Battered by *Deadly Tornado* in May, Killing 5

Tornado damage on Kingshighway Boulevard in the Fountain Park neighborhood. Photo courtesy of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Vienna I. Austin | Editor

A devastating EF3 tornado ripped through St. Louis on the afternoon of May 16, killing five people, injuring 38, and leaving a trail of destruction through North City. The storm caused an estimated $1.6 billion in property damage along its 23-mile path, according to The St. Louis American, and hit some of the region's most vulnerable neighborhoods hardest.

Mariah Richardson, a local playwright and professor of Mass Communications at Florissant Valley, is among those who live in a North City neighborhood that was impacted by the tornado. Richardson resides in the Fountain Park and Lewis Place neighborhood, where the nearly mile-wide twister tore through homes and businesses with estimated wind speeds upwards of 140 miles per hour at some points. Talking to The Forum, she described the damage as "devastating to minor" in her area: "Many people on Fountain Place have lost their homes totally [sic]. The church had massive damage. On my block on Lewis Place, there was a loss of roofs and garages and chimneys and windows. We all lost old growth trees that blocked access to the streets." Luckily, the damage to Richardson's house was relatively minimal, according to her.

The tornado touched down in Richmond Heights at 2:41 p.m. and quickly grew in intensity. It moved northeast through Clayton, snapping trees, downing power lines, and causing minor damage to buildings before entering the City of St. Louis and cutting across the northwest corner of Forest Park, near the intersection of Skinker Boulevard and Lindell Boulevard. Smashing through DeBaliviere Place, the storm became stronger and struck a span of North City neighborhoods between Academy and North Riverfront as it peaked at EF3 intensity. It ripped walls from buildings, flattened a number of houses, and knocked out power for days in some areas. Of the tornado's five casualties, four were elderly residents sheltering in North City structures destroyed by the

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Photo courtesy of STLCC.

Congratulations to STLCC's 2025 *Graduating Class*

Collin Brinkley | Student Writer

We at The Forum would like to congratulate our 2025 graduating class for a successful journey through STLCC. Despite the stress and adversity you faced, you managed to power through and we would like to wish you good luck and Godspeed in your future endeavors—whether that be furthering your education or pursuing your goals in the workforce.

Furthermore, we'd like to highlight the most popular degrees that Florissant Valley students obtained this semester on your journey with us. At number three, we have Deaf Communication-American Sign Language with 13 graduates. For number two, we have Nursing with 21 graduates. Finally, coming in at number one, we have General Transfer Studies with 74 students!

According to the registrar's office, overall, we had 188 Flo Valley students graduate this semester, and 334 graduate this school year, of the total 2,307 STLCC students in this year's graduating class. We want to commend you all and say that regardless of your reason for coming to St. Louis Community College, you have been a valued student, and we cherish the time you spent in our community.

To our staff and to our teachers—who are also staff—thank you. Lastly, and once again, to our graduates, thank you, good luck, and happy trails!

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Student Press to the Rescue

Kevin Hawkins | Staff Writer

Here is a question: Would you consider yourself to be someone who cares about freedom and the right to expression? If so, ask yourself some other questions, like why have so many student journalists in recent years been harassed, assaulted, detained, or even threatened with deportation? Why have so many student journalists been suspended or expelled from their educational institutions, maligned on social media and throughout their communities? Why are administrators at schools, colleges, and universities across the United States so adamant about keeping information from being reported by students who are tasked with doing exactly that?

Here's another question: Did you know that one of the most significant cases in setting the landscape around the rights of student journalists happened right here in the St. Louis region? Before that happened, the watershed case Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District helped establish the right to free speech for students in public school settings.

It was 1965, and a small group of students at a junior high school in Des Moines, Iowa devised a plan to wear black armbands to protest the Vietnam War and show their support for peace. School administrators learned of the students' plans, and they quickly, preemptively banned students at the school from wearing armbands. Undeterred, the students wore them anyway, and school district officials suspended them, only allowing them back after they agreed to remove their armbands. The students and their parents sued the school district for violating the student's First Amendment rights.

By 1969, the litigation had wound its way to the Supreme Court on appeal. In a 7-2 decision, Justice Abe Fortas wrote for the majority, stating, "it can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate," ruling in the students' favor. The decision granted students across the country legal precedent for freedom of speech. Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District helped to set the national tone for students' free speech for almost 20 years.

Then, in 1988, right here in North County, the case Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier would significantly move legal precedent backwards toward the other end of the spectrum. Student reporters at the Spectrum, the school-sponsored newspaper at Hazelwood East High School, were reporting issues that the school principal had deemed to be too sensitive.

Because the students were reporting on the experiences of some of their peers in dealing with their parents' divorces and teen pregnancy, the principal argued that the topics in the paper were not age appropriate for high school students. He also voiced concerns that the student subjects of the stories would suffer negative consequences at school. The student reporters disagreed, arguing that stories like theirs allowed for honest discussion about issues that affected many teens at Hazelwood East High School and beyond. The principal, Robert Reynolds, disagreed and removed the two articles on those topics from the school paper prior to publication, and the students and their parents sued the school district, citing the students' First Amendment rights.

The Supreme Court ruled against the students, setting a new standard against student freedom of speech when publications are school-sponsored. The courts ruled that public schools are within their rights when they edit, restrict, or censor content published by schools so long as their actions are in line with sound educational purposes. The court's decision in Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier set student press rights back decades and has inspired a revolutionary movement that still thrives to this day throughout Missouri and across the United States.

New Voices is a campaign led by the Student Press Law Center (SPLC) that provides leadership and support for students and advocates working to pass legislation that turns back the precedent set by Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier.

The Student Press Law Center, founded in 1974 is an independent, not-for-profit organization that advocates for press freedom rights for students and their advisors in high schools, colleges, and universities. With headquarters based in Washington, DC, the SPLC provides education, develops programs, and staffs a legal hotline that provides a team of legal experts to help answer questions and concerns related to student media. With campaigns like New Voices, SPLC has helped to pass legislation in 18 states across the county, and advocates all over the United States are continuing to engage policy makers to adopt legislation that helps to protect student press freedoms and validates the hard work of student journalists.

In Missouri, we recently had SB 258, the Cronkite New Voices Act, which was sponsored by Democratic Senator Barbara Washington from Jackson County, Missouri. The bill, among other things, "provides that in both public high schools and public institutions of higher education, a student journalist, as defined in the act, has the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press in school-sponsored media."

It continues to state, "Student journalists shall be responsible for determining the content of school-sponsored media, while student-media advisors are responsible for teaching and encouraging expression and the standards of English and journalism. No student-media advisor shall be subject to disciplinary actions described in the act for refusal to abridge or infringe upon freedom of expression." The Cronkite New Voices Act, received endorsements from the ACLU of Missouri, the Missouri Press Association, Journalism St. Louis, and the Missouri National Education Association. The bill received a second read and was referred to the Education Committee, but it didn't reach a final vote.

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The Forum Editorial Team

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Image made with the Adobe Creative Suite and help from Adobe Firefly.

Why *Social Media* Can Be *Harmful* for Kids and Teens

Jonathon Marlette | Student Writer

As today's technology keeps growing and changing, social media has become a huge part of our everyday lives. Apps like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat are everywhere, and it's now completely normal for young teens and even young kids to have them on their phones. To young people today it feels like if you're not on social media, you're missing out on something. While social media does have positives, like helping us stay in touch with friends and be able to express our creativity, I believe it can be very damaging to teens and young kids. Many kids struggle with comparison issues, and social media is a perfect place for that to happen, along with other problems such mental health risks and the constant spread of negativity. This can make social media more harmful than good for a lot of young people.

One of the biggest problems we face with social media is how it affects our mental health. Many teens today struggle with anxiety and depression. A lot of that comes from problems of comparison and lack of self-worth. Think about what you see being posted online. You don't see people posting their "off" days or a bad hair days. You see people at their best for the most part. You see their perfect pictures at just the right angles; you see their expensive vacations and their fancy clothes. But you must realize that's not the whole story. When young people see these kinds of things day after day, it starts to become easy to think, "How come I don't own that?" or "Why don't I look like that?" Even if we know deep down that online personas may not be real and it can be staged, this still has a way of making you feel not good enough. According to a study by the American Psychological Association, teens who spend more time on social media are more likely to report feelings of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Weir).

Another serious problem with social media is cyberbullying. Unlike in-person bullying, cyberbullying doesn't stop when you aren't around them. It can follow you home and into your room and doesn't just end if you are alone. People online are much more likely to say something hurtful and rude, because they know that they won't have to be accountable for these words, and because they can hide behind the screen. Hurtful words, inappropriate messages and screenshots and not being a part of group chats are all real ways of hurting someone. When things like that happen online, it can feel like everyone is watching and can see what's happening. In a survey from the Pew Research Center, they found that nearly 60% of U.S. teens have experienced some form of cyberbullying, including name-calling, spreading false rumors or receiving unwanted explicit images (Vogels).

On top of everything, there are a lot of things on social media that young people should not be seeing, such as inappropriate and sexually explicit content. Even with age restrictions, parental controls and filters, it's still incredibly easy for kids to come across inappropriate and harmful content whether that's violent videos, unrealistic comparisons or inappropriate images/videos. There's also a risk of young people being preyed upon by online predators and strangers. Most kids don't understand that there could be people out there with bad intentions and that can make them vulnerable to those people.

Then there is the constant peer pressure. The need to post the right thing, get enough likes, and to seem cool or like you fit in online. For many young people, social media can become a place where they feel the need to perform and to alter themselves, instead of being their true authentic selves. If you don't get enough likes, it can start to feel like you aren't good enough or that nobody really cares. If your post doesn't get the right attention, you can start to feel invisible and like you don't matter. It can become a constant cycle where someone's self-worth is directly linked to how their social media preforms. This can be a very toxic mindset, especially for young people who are still developing, trying to figure out who they are and what they want in life.

Now, of course, social media isn't all bad, there are a lot of pros to it. It can help young people learn to express themselves, learn about many different things, and connect and make new friends with people who have similar interests. For some people who may feel alone in real life and struggle to make personal connections, online communities and friend groups can be very helpful. But where the problem lies is that most young people don't have the mental capacity, tools or maturity to handle all the negative aspects that come with it. At the end of the day social media was originally made for older teens and adults, but it's now being used by millions and millions of young teens and kids every day. Many of these kids are just not ready for constant exposure, peer pressure and serious consequences that can come with social media.

So, what are we supposed to do about this? Parents, teachers, older siblings and family members play a huge role in this by being able to have serious open conversations with young people about what they could and might be seeing and experiencing online. Things like setting screen time limits on phones and apps, encouraging young people to have hobbies outside of their phones, and making sure young people understand how to stay out of trouble and safe on social media can keep them out of trouble. Companies also must take more responsibility for their actions. They need to have better privacy settings, content regulation, and much stricter age verification. All of these could go a long way in helping young people navigate and experience social media.

In summary, social media is not going to disappear. But this does not mean you just completely ignore the damage it can do to young people. If we want our younger generations to be able to experience social media in a positive way, it's up to use to us change how things are going. This means having some difficult conversations and some awkward moments, but it's all worth it in the end to ensure a safe place for kids and young teens to grow and express themselves.

Fall Registration Is Open

Take charge of your future today. Schedule a meeting with your student success advisor!

Advising Email:
advising@stlcc.edu

Advising Phone Number:
314-539-5465

Advising Hours:

Monday-Thursday | 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Friday | 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Advising Locations:

Florissant Valley: Administration 158

Forest Park: Student Center 200

Meramec: Administration/Clark Hall 202

South County: Student Services Area

Wildwood: Student Services Area

Spring Fest 2025 Brings Games, Food, and a Mechanical Bull to *Flo Valley*

Vienna I. Austin | Editor

Florissant Valley students and staff enjoyed Spring Fest 2025 on May 6 with food, music, a range of carnival games, and a mechanical bull ride. Spring Fest, an annual tradition at STLCC across its four main campuses over multiple days, brings each campus community together to eat and have fun before finals week.

Activities were concentrated on a small patio near the Physical Education building, with food trucks parked on a nearby parking lot and a large inflatable slide at the library's south quad. Among the booths and games, there was a high striker, a frisbee toss, a photo station, and horseshoes.

At one point, a crowd of students gathered to dance in front of a DJ booth as speakers blared music. Two people at a time sat down at a small station to be drawn as caricatures. Later, the mechanical bull ride, an ever-popular attraction, opened. Students gathered around and watched—many taking videos on their phones—as a line of festival goers, one by one, tried their hand at clinging to the bull while it spun and shook violently, inevitably being thrown off.

According to Campus Life Manager Dwyane Morgan, 275 attendees signed into Spring Fest at the Flo Valley campus this year, which he said cost a total of $13,830.81.

Student Brenen Hatton rides the mechanical bull at Spring Fest. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

Food trucks at Spring Fest. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

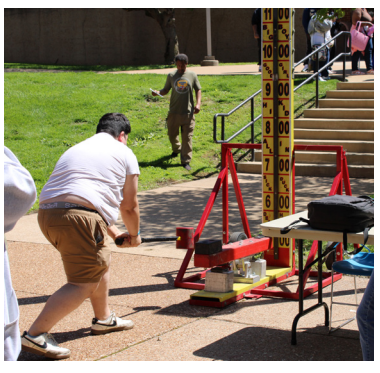
Spring Fest's mechanical bull ride sits unused while it's being set up. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

Students and staff order from a food truck. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

The sign-in booth at Spring Fest. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

Students dance to music on the Physical Education building patio. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

Students sit to be drawn by caricature artists. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.



A student takes a swing at the festival's high striker. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

A student plays a frisbee toss game at Spring Fest. Photo courtesy of Vienna I. Austin, editor.

Graduation, Cont from P. 1

All graduation photos are courtesy of STLCC.

Deadly Tornado, Cont from P. 1

historic storm. Eventually, the twister crossed the Mississippi River into Illinois and later dissipated.
Richardson was at home when the tornado struck her area, finishing grading at the end of the semester. She recalls being alerted as the storm careened toward her neighborhood—and the time she spent sheltering in her basement: "The power went out, and I got an alert from the National Weather Service... [sic] went to my basement, where it was quite frightening because I could hear things hitting my house." While sheltering, she became concerned about damage to her house, and went to check on it: "I peeked out the window, and I could only see the hosta in front of it, and there was a huge piece of pink insulation resting on it. I thought maybe my roof was blown off. I went to my attic and saw that my roof was still there. Some of my immediate neighbors were not so lucky." Two of those tragically left dead by the storm were killed in buildings in Fountain Park, likely within a mile of Richardson's home.

On June 9, a little over three weeks after the tornado, the Trump administration approved Missouri Governor Mike Kehoe's request for a major disaster declaration, allowing residents in affected areas to apply for aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The following day, FEMA announced the decision in a press release, writing, "The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Scott and St. Louis counties and the independent city of St. Louis. Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster." While it was unclear at first how much aid would be provided, Missouri Senator Eric Schmitt stated in a June 10 post on X (formerly called Twitter) that FEMA will be providing $71 million in federal money. Before they authorized disaster assistance, a total of five teams from FEMA were sent to the St. Louis region to assess damage—one to the county and four to the city, where most of the damage is concentrated.

Local and state-level politicians from both sides of the aisle welcomed and celebrated the news of Trump's approval of FEMA aid. Governor Mike Kehoe wrote in an X post on June 9, "I appreciate President Trump for calling me personally this evening to notify us that he has approved Missouri's request for a major disaster declaration in response to the May 16 severe storms and tornadoes. Missourians are grateful for the President's leadership." St. Louis Mayor Cara Spencer reposted his message, and added, "Help is on the way! I just received phone calls from @GovMikeKehoe and @HawleyMO. I truly appreciate their strong support and @POTUS' declaration. Details of @fema assistance will be announced as soon as they become available."

Missouri Senator Josh Hawley previously accused FEMA of "slow-walking" their response to the storm in an interview with STLPR, saying, "I don't know if FEMA has processed it yet, and this gets into a big issue that I've got with FEMA right now. They are slow-walking everything." However, on June 9—after the approval of Kehoe's request for federal aid—Hawley took to X to thank the president, posting, "Thank you @realDonaldTrump for again approving disaster relief for Missouri. Much, much needed."

Meanwhile, the State of Missouri and the City of St. Louis also plan to provide millions of dollars in aid. On June 11, state legislators quickly approved a bill that would provide $100 million for disaster relief in the St. Louis region, and, at the time of writing, city officials are considering a plan to use $30 million from the Rams settlement money to assist in rebuilding.

Controversy erupted after emergency sirens failed to sound in the city before the storm hit. The staff of the City Emergency Management Agency (CEMA), including CEMA Commissioner Sarah Russell, were at an off-site workshop when the tornado touched down near the city—despite forecasts warning of severe weather.

There are two buttons to activate the city's emergency sirens: one at the St. Louis Fire Department and another at the CEMA office. Historically, CEMA has been responsible for sounding the sirens. Moments after the touchdown, being unable to activate the sirens personally, Russell called the fire department. After quickly confirming details about the twister, Russell asked the dispatcher, "You got the sirens?" to which the dispatcher replied, "Yes ma'am." The call ended shortly after—but the sirens were never activated.

Mariah Richardson didn't realize at first that the city's emergency sirens didn't sound, since she learned of the tornado on her phone: "I was not surprised that there were no city sirens because I had gotten the alert from the NWS. Not until I was talking to neighbors did I realize that the city sirens had not gone off."

In the immediate aftermath of the tornado, Commissioner Russell was placed on paid administrative leave while the incident is investigated.

In a May 20 press release announcing Russell's dismissal, Mayor Spencer's office called Russell's instructions "ambiguous" and made the full audio recording of the one-minute call publicly available to "provide the public with a more complete understanding of what went wrong on Friday." In the same press release, the mayor's office revealed that the button at the fire department was later discovered to be broken due to a malfunction but that it was being repaired.

Following the failure to sound the sirens, the mayor's office announced that the St. Louis Fire Department alone, not CEMA, will be responsible for activating them in the future.

Barely a month into her first term, the May 16 tornado poses a tragic and unforeseen test for newly-elected Mayor Cara Spencer. After ousting incumbent Tishaura Jones, Spencer was sworn in as the 48th mayor of St. Louis on April 15, 2025—exactly 31 days before the deadly storm. She has spent much of her early mayorship overseeing the city's recovery effort, holding countless press conferences on the tornado, the damage it caused, and subsequent relief programs.

In a press conference on May 20, Spencer seemed to be visibly distraught while talking about the tornado. Her eyes appeared watery, and her face appeared red. "The damage is so extensive. People have been so gracious to bring me into their homes, and... there aren't words," Spencer said, her voice breaking as she spoke. "Entire sides, fronts, backs, tops of homes are missing. People have wrapped their personal belongings in Saran wrap, tarps." She continued, "It is unbelievable what people are going through right now. There are no words to describe the feeling of hopelessness."

Richardson, too, remembers being emotionally raw for days following the historic twister. "I suffered sadness and tears for several days because of the loss of homes and lives," she said. "The widespread damage is unreal. I was without power for 8 days and had to create a routine to get my devices charged to get through each day until it was restored. I lost all of my perishable food. The good thing is that the community came together and are still out there helping. The city government had been slow at allocating money, and [sic] well as the state."

Those whose homes or property were damaged by the storm can apply for federal assistance by registering online at www.disasterassistance.gov, by calling (800)-621-3362, or by using FEMA's mobile app, but "should first file claims with their insurance providers," according to the agency. The deadline to apply for most aid is 60 days following the president's approval of the major disaster declaration—or roughly Aug. 9—according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

SBA Opens Business Recovery Center in St. Louis to Help Businesses and Residents Impacted by May Storms with Low interest Disaster Loans

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announced today the opening of an SBA Business Recovery Center (BRC) in the City of St. Louis to assist small businesses, private nonprofit (PNP) organizations and residents affected by severe storms, straight-line winds, tornadoes and flooding occurring May 16.

Beginning Thursday, June 12, SBA customer service representatives will be on hand at the Business Recovery Center in St. Louis to answer questions and assist with the disaster loan application process. No appointment is necessary, walk-ins are welcome. Those who prefer to schedule an in-person appointment in advance can do so at appointment.sba.gov.

The center's hours of operation are as follows:

THE INDEPENDENT CITY OF ST. LOUIS Business Recovery Center St. Louis Community College Harrison Education Center 3140 Cass Ave., Rm. #104 St. Louis, MO 63106 Opens at 1:00 p.m., Thursday, June 12 Mondays – Fridays, 8:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The following Disaster Loan Outreach Center (DLOC) location is also open and continues to serve survivors:

ST. LOUIS COUNTY Disaster Loan Outreach Center St. Louis County Library Florissant Valley Branch Quiet Room 195 S. New Florissant Rd. Florissant, MO 63031

Mondays – Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Fridays – Saturdays, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

"SBA's Business Recovery Centers have consistently proven their value to business owners following a disaster," said Chris Stallings, associate administrator of the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience at the SBA. "Business owners can visit these centers to meet face-to-face with specialists who will guide them through the disaster loan application process and connect them with resources to support their recovery." Businesses and nonprofits are eligible to apply for business physical disaster loans and may borrow up to $2 million to repair or replace disaster-damaged or destroyed real estate, machinery and equipment, inventory, and other business assets. The SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) program is available to small businesses, small agricultural cooperatives, nurseries, and private nonprofit organizations impacted by financial losses directly related to these disasters. The SBA is unable to provide disaster loans to agricultural producers, farmers, or ranchers, except for small aquaculture enterprises.

EIDLs are available for working capital needs caused by the disaster and are available even if the business or PNP did not suffer any physical damage. The loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other bills not paid due to the disaster.

Homeowners and renters are eligible to apply for home and personal property loans and may borrow up to $100,000 to replace or repair personal property, such as clothing, furniture, cars, and

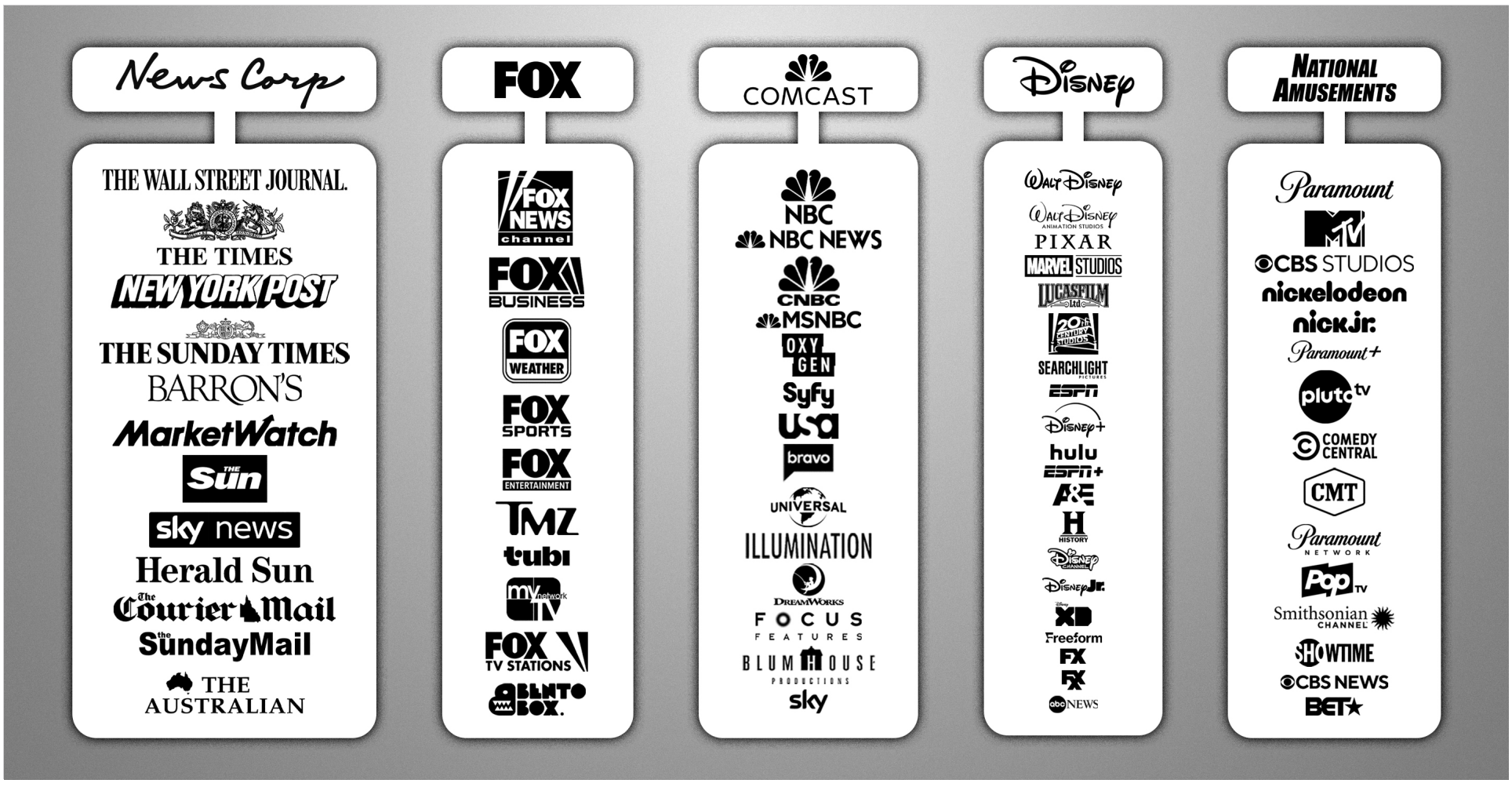
Cont. P. 8 ⇨

Student Press, Cont from P. 2

Student journalists' perspectives are essential as they are those of global citizens who have consumed information and experienced the world through technology, which has been constantly evolving. For the most part, student journalists today have the opportunity for a wider-ranging understanding of their world than the student press of previous generations. Many young students of journalism began their foray into the profession already skillful and information-savvy, tending to be more engaged with current events, often in real-time using social media platforms like Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. They provide a fresher, more innovative perspective on the issues, and can offer up unbiased observations, ask important questions, and challenge the status quo.

Since student reporters are generally new to the world of journalism and focus more on topics taking place in high schools, colleges, and universities, they are generally not as beholden to the outside—and often biased—interests of decision-makers above them. Members of the student press are most likely just learning to build those relationships, laying the beginnings of what will become the foundations of their individual process and style.

When asked about the importance of student journalists, our student editor at The Forum, Vienna Austin, said, "Student journalists are often given great freedom by their sponsors and faculty advisors to report and write as they please, and their outlets typically receive regular funding from their respective institutions. There is no threat of being bought out by some billionaire who wants to use the news source as a toy to affect their own agenda, and there is constant stability and freedom to grow. I think the community and the readers like this, as it makes student media and student journalists feel like a constant pillar on campus that can be depended on."



Austin makes very real and relevant points about billionaire corporate ownership of news outlets in the United States and across the globe. For the past few decades, a collection of ever-shifting multibillion-dollar media conglomerates, often called the "Big Six," have taken control of roughly 90% of national and local news outlets, as well as many international outlets. They include Disney, Comcast, News Corp, National Amusements, WarnerMedia, and Verizon. It becomes difficult to imagine that the competition that student journalists have faced in reporting on relevant issues can be unaffected by the corporate ownership of news publications at the highest levels.

Some of the same media monopolies are also in control of most entertainment outlets such as cable news channels, television studios, film studios, online entertainment, and video game companies, including Marvel Studios, DreamWorks, MTV, DC Comics, HLN, Comedy Central, Cartoon Network, the History Channel, ESPN, FanDuel, Showtime, and National Geographic.

Now, consider that many of the heads of these global media conglomerates, including Shari Redstone (National Amusements), Bob Iger (Disney), David Zaslav (Warner Bros. Universal), Brian L. Roberts (Comcast), and Rupert Murdoch (News-Corp) to name a few, are also very active in the national political process and continue to fund political action committees (PACs), political parties, and the campaigns of policy makers who create the legislation that can restrict—or expand—press freedom and free expression. Thus, it becomes impossible to see our news content as uninfluenced by corporate ownership.

While independent news outlets and entertainment still exist, there is no doubt that the vast majority of media content we consume is controlled by only a handful of corporate media monopolies. Organizations like the Student Press Law Center, though, help student journalists provide independent, grassroots news coverage. In these times, it becomes more important that student journalists are supported in their efforts to keep our communities informed regarding current events that are relevant to the lives of so many citizens across the country.

Note from the staff:

The Forum recognizes the fundamental need for the public to have access to accurate and independent information. We look forward to continuing to deliver objective coverage on all things local and national, as our student journalists remain at the forefront of our reporting.

SGA annual banquet, courtesy of @stlccedu on Instagram.

What Will Your *STLCC Legacy* Be?

Stephanie Licklider | Student Writer

STLCC's Student Government Association (SGA) held their annual banquet May 9 at the Renaissance Airport Hotel. All four STLCC campuses came together to celebrate students' achievements.

Florissant Valley's very own Brenen Hatton won Emerging Leader of the Flo Valley campus, a student who is involved with numerous activities, clubs, and events—not to mention classes. He was completely taken by surprise and honored.

The SGA banquet is an inspiring event, one that can encourage a student to become more involved in their campus—to leave a legacy.

Summer Library Hours:

Florissant Valley Library is located on the second floor of the Instructional Resources building, just west of the Student Center. Hours (subject to change based on campus projects)

June 9-Aug. 3, 2025

Monday-Thursday, 7:30 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Friday, 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday and Sunday, CLOSED

Please note:

June 19 - CLOSED (Juneteenth)

July 4 - CLOSED (Independence Day)

SBA Loans, Cont from P. 6

appliances. Homeowners may apply for up to $500,000 to replace or repair their primary residence.

SBA representatives will also provide help to business owners and residents at disaster recovery centers when they are opened in the impacted area.

Interest rates are as low as 4% for small businesses, 3.62 for nonprofits, and 2.81% for homeowners and renters with terms up to 30 years. Interest does not begin to accrue, and payments are not due until 12 months from the date of the first loan disbursement. The SBA determines eligibility and sets loan amounts and terms based on each applicant's financial condition. To apply online, visit sba.gov/disaster. Applicants may also call SBA's Customer Service Center at (800) 659-2955 or email disastercustomerservice@sba.gov for more information on SBA disaster assistance. For people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, please dial 7-1-1 to access telecommunications relay services.

The filing deadline to return applications for physical property damage is Aug. 11, 2025. The deadline to return economic injury applications is March 9, 2026.

Abby Westhoff | Artist

2025 Nursing *Pinning Ceremony*

A nursing pinning ceremony is a special event that signifies a nursing student's completion of their program and their formal entry into the nursing profession. It is a tradition separate from the general graduation ceremony, where students receive their nursing pin and recite the Nightingale Pledge. This ceremony symbolizes the transition from student to professional nurse.

A *Bittersweet* Farewell to Student Editor *Vienna Austin*

Stephanie Licklider | Staff Writer

The Forum bids "bon voyage" to its current student editor, Vienna Austin. It would be a sin to hold this very passionate writer, editor, and activist back. I've been working with Vienna for a year, and I wanted to send our glorious editor off with a celebratory article. To get a better look at her time at The Forum, I interviewed Vienna to see how she remembers her experience leading Flo Valley's student paper.

Stephanie Licklider: How many years have you been editor? Since when?

Vienna Austin: I've been the student editor of The Forum for just under two years. I began working as the editor in August 2023 at the beginning of the fall semester after being a staff writer for one semester.

Stephanie Licklider: How did you feel about getting the job of editor?

Vienna Austin: I was very excited! I came to really value my work at The Forum when I was a staff writer, so when Mary Horner, our faculty advisor, asked me to take the job, I was happy to do so!

Stephanie Licklider: What was the toughest challenge you faced as editor?

Student Editor Vienna Austin. Photo courtesy of the Flo Valley Mass Media Club.

Vienna Austin: When I first became the editor, The Forum's staff only consisted of me and Mary. The only other staff members left—either graduated or had to leave to keep up with their coursework—after the previous semester, and the paper was still recovering from being defunct during the COVID-19 pandemic. It took a long time of me and Mary running The Forum almost completely by ourselves before we were able to attract more staff and get to a spot that we were happy with.

Stephanie Licklider: What do you feel was your greatest accomplishment as editor?

Vienna Austin: I'm most proud of the fact that I was able to help rebuild The Forum post-COVID along with Mary and our staff members. It's been long and difficult but incredibly rewarding to lead Florissant Valley's student newspaper during a period of such change and to help return it from a struggling pamphlet into a robust eight-page publication.

Vienna just graduated with a degree in General Transfer Studies. She is heading off to the University of Missouri-Columbia to study journalism. "I had no intention to become a journalist when I joined The Forum Newspaper," she said. "I was interested in writing as a hobby, and I had some experience with getting articles published, but I didn't envision myself working as a journalist in the future. Now, as I'm leaving The Forum after nearly two years as its editor, I can't imagine myself doing anything else. It's not an exaggeration to say that this newspaper changed my life—and for the better." I also spoke to Faculty Advisor Mary Horner about her time working with Vienna: "Austin was instrumental in reviving The Forum student newspaper after the pandemic. Her excellent writing and interviewing skills were obvious from the first articles she contributed as a staff writer. After her promotion to editor, she pushed for and helped create a larger print publication with a stronger online presence and recruited and coordinated volunteer staff writers and photographers to accomplish this goal. Her commitment to journalism and The Forum has had an impact that sets the bar high for our next editor. I have no doubt she will succeed in her academic and career goals, and I look forward to reading her future bylines in major publications."

I'm sure I speak for everyone who has ever worked with Vienna, that we will miss you, and we wish you good luck in your future endeavors.